



Rule of Law and Justice System Improvement

PROJUSTICE seeks to reform justice service delivery.



USAID staff

Women's group members, mediators, and DPK experts meet in Cité Soleil.

Since October 2010:

- Free legal services were provided to 3,491 people in three low-income and marginalized jurisdictions, in partnership with the local bar associations.
- 464 priority cases (approximately 12 percent of Haiti's prison population) in prolonged/illegal pre-trial detention in the National Penitentiary, the Petionville Women's Prison, and Carrefour Prison were processed by PROJUSTICE. Of these cases, 37 detainees were released and 141 cases were moved toward final disposition. The project continues to work on the balance of the 286 priority cases.
- 470 community leaders and residents who reside in the 50,000-resident Jean Marie Vincent IDP Camp in Cité Soleil and 162 residents of displacement camps in Port-au-Prince, Saint Marc, and Petit-Goâve were trained to mediate family disputes.
- Roundtables to publicize free legal assistance services reached over 1,000 people; participants were informed of their legal rights and educated on civil matters.
- 6,000 of 8,000 case files destroyed or damaged by the earthquake in the Prosecutor's Office and the Court of First Instance have been reconstructed and filed in Port-au-Prince.

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PROJUSTICE

A functioning justice system that protects citizens, resolves disputes, and respects human rights is critical to a democracy. However, meagre resources, lack of training, and a convoluted and antiquated legal system have resulted in a lack of access to judicial services for Haitian citizens. Detainees without financial means can remain in pre-trial detention for years in extremely difficult conditions. The situation was exacerbated following the January 2010 earthquake, in which the Supreme Court, Appellate Court, and Court of First Instance collapsed, killing and wounding senior judicial officials and civil servants and subsequently further weakening the judicial sector.

The USAID-funded PROJUSTICE project was launched in 2009 with the goals of strengthening the judiciary and increasing security through improved rule of law. PROJUSTICE works closely with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, judges, prosecutors, and other justice sector officials. Key activities during the first year included providing free legal assistance to residents of Cité Soleil, an extremely poor area of Port-au-Prince, and working on improvements to justice system procedures and institutions in the target areas of Saint-Marc and Petit Goave. Following the earthquake, focus shifted to recovery efforts, including the reconstitution of damaged legal files and assistance to displaced persons, such as the facilitation of mediation in camps.

Objectives

PROJUSTICE works to promote an efficient and fair judicial system as a key element in establishing stability and security, enabling economic development, and improving citizen confidence in government institutions.

Activities

1. **Casework:** Post-earthquake, the project focused on reducing prolonged pre-trial detention, recovering and storing files from the collapsed court buildings, and improving case processing for specific categories, including gender-based violence cases.
2. **Alternative Dispute Resolution:** USAID provided training to camp representatives, prosecutors, magistrates, and justices of the peace on alternative dispute resolution (mediation) to reduce the burden on the judiciary.
3. **Legal Aid and Education:** USAID provided free legal services to 2,248 individuals through legal service centers. The project also conducted a public awareness campaign on how to access services.
4. **Criminal Codes:** The project is collaborating with the Presidential Commission on criminal code reform to revise the criminal code and procedures, which date from 1837. This includes providing expert legislative drafting advice and substantive inputs to the revised codes, which are nearly complete.

Life of Project: July 2009 – April 2014

Implementing Partner: Tetra Tech DPK